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SOUTH ASIA

4. Ceylon may change its rubber policy:

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Ceylon's Finance Minister has stated to US Embassy officials that he is greatly interested in the American proposal to buy a large quantity of Ceylon's rubber over a period of time, a proposal on which he had not previously been consulted. Both the Minister and the Governor of the Central Bank are concerned over the weakening of Ceylon's dollar trade position.

The two officials believe it will be possible to convince the Ceylonese Prime Minister not to permit further export of rubber to Communist China.

Comment: The influential Ceylonese rubber growers may have induced their government to reconsider US bulk purchases, in view of the difficulties encountered in arranging the 2 October shipment to China and the slim prospect that further shipping will be available in the future.

5. United States Embassy comments on Thai coup:

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The recent coup in Thailand was motivated by the desire of the dominant military clique to prevent the King's exercising his limited powers and to obtain civil and Parliamentary control, according to the US Embassy in Bangkok.

Although the coup was a purely internal development and will not affect Thailand's pro-Western foreign policy, the Embassy's "first impression" of the new regime is that it will be less stable than its predecessor. The Embassy also points out that the legal position of the new government is not clear and that there is a possibility that the King may abdicate rather than accept the new administration.

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Comment: The rivalries among the various military leaders have not been eliminated by their joint seizure of complete control. The retention of Phibun as Premier, however, will preserve his political acumen as a stabilizing influence.

The coup was obviously timed to present the King with a fait accompli. Despite Thai veneration of the monarchy, the King's abdication, which appears quite doubtful, would be unlikely to precipitate unrest.

EASTERN EUROPE

6. Another leading Czechoslovak Communist reported under arrest:

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The US Embassy in Prague has received a fairly reliable report that Bedrich Geminder, one of the chief links between the Czechoslovak Communist Party and Moscow, was arrested at the Prague broadcasting station on 29 November.

Comment: The close timing of Geminder's reported arrest with that of Rudolf Slansky emphasizes the seriousness with which the USSR must regard its current problems in Czechoslovakia. These arrests are the only known cases of trusted Moscow Communists being deposed in Eastern Europe since the war.

Geminder was generally regarded as the most powerful behind-the-scene official of the Party. As head of its International Secretariat, he worked closely with Rudolf Slansky. He was Party representative in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czechoslovak representative to the Cominform, and he had held several important editorial positions.

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